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**‘Am I a spy?’: Anglo-Soviet cultural exchange and
the Cold War, c. 1958-c. 1975**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASJ:	<i>Anglo-Soviet Journal</i>
BC:	British Council
BSFS:	British-Soviet Friendship Society
FO:	Foreign (and Commonwealth) Office
LGU:	Leningrad State University [<i>Leningradskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet</i>]
MGU:	Moscow State University [<i>Moskovskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet</i>]
NUS:	National Union of Students
PRO:	Public Records Office
SCR:	Society for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union
SRC:	Soviet Relations Committee
TNA:	The National Archives
VOKS:	Society for the Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries [<i>Vsesoiuznoe Obshchestvo Kul'turnoi Sviazi s zagranitse</i>]



Poster for Tat'iana Lioznova's film, *The Memory of the Heart*
[*Pamiat' serdtsa*] (Moscow, 1958)

INTRODUCTION

Strolling alongside the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR onto Ivanovskaia Square, the red star atop Spasskaia Tower looming in the background, and on through the shadow of the Tsar Bell, Ralph Chadwick and his companions come to a stop. ‘*Moskva...*’, one mutters in wonder looking out over the Soviet capital, the silhouette of one of Stalin’s great skyscrapers rising up on the horizon. ‘*Da, Moskva,*’ replies Chadwick. For him, though, it is not these symbols of Russian power that have seduced him. It is the memory of Ekaterina Ivanovna. In the final years of the Second World War, it was Ekaterina who had saved Ralph from the retreating *Wehrmacht* after his plane was shot down and, after she was shot by a German soldier, it was Ralph who stayed at her bedside until the end. It is the *pamiat’ serdtsa*—memory of the heart—that has brought Chadwick back to the Soviet Union.¹ It is not insignificant that Ralph Chadwick and Ekaterina Ivanovna should have appeared on Soviet cinema screens in the autumn of 1958. The death of Stalin earlier in the decade and the subsequent changes in Soviet life had meant that, as early as 1954, Western observers were commenting on the Soviet Union’s marked reestablishment of contact with the outside world.² As part of this reestablishment of contact, following a ten-day visit by the British prime minister, Harold Macmillan, to Moscow in February 1959, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom signed an agreement on ‘relations in the scientific, technological, educational and cultural fields’.³ Formalising a previous tentative arrangement reached

¹ *Pamiat’ serdtsa*. Dir. Tat’iana Lioznova. Kinostudiia imeni Gor’kogo (Moscow: 1958)

² F. F., ‘Soviet Cultural Collaboration: The Role of the Friendship Societies in the Satellite States’, *The World Today*, 10:5 (1954), p. 197.

³ ‘Treaty Series No. 82’ (Cmnd. 917, 1959)

between the two governments in 1956,⁴ this agreement established for the first time official channels of cultural engagement between the two nations, from increased cooperation in the scientific and technical fields to tours of theatre companies and orchestras. Over the next fifty years, tours of the Old Vic and the Bolshoi, of Scythian gold and of British art and literature and exhibitions of the best of British and Soviet music brought citizens on both sides closer together than at any period since the Revolution. The very personal tale of love in the face of adversity of Tat'iana Lioznova's protagonists in her film, *The Memory of the Heart*, was indicative, therefore, of a much broader change in the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union during the late-1950s.

This cultural aspect of the Cold War has become increasingly prominent in the broader historiography of that conflict over the past couple of decades; David Caute's *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* and Jack Masey and Conway Lloyd Morgan's *Cold War Confrontations: US Exhibitions and their Role in the Cultural Cold War*, for instance, both demonstrate how culture was deployed as a weapon on both sides of the iron curtain in an attempt to 'win' the war, while *Cold War Modern: Design 1945-1970* has revealed how, even away from the 'front-line', Cold War influences came to shape the everyday lives of people across both blocs.⁵ With respect to exchanges of people, Michael David-Fox's recent book, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941*, offers a more nuanced account of Soviet efforts in cultural diplomacy—though its concentration is on an earlier period—while Caute's previous work has focused on 'fellow-travellers', i.e. left-wing intellectuals, and their

⁴ 'Soviet Union No. 1' (Cmnd. 689, 1959)

⁵ David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Jack Masey and Conway Lloyd Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations: US Exhibitions and their Role in the Cultural Cold War* (Zürich: Lars Müller, 2008); David Crowley and Jane Pavitt (eds), *Cold War Modern: Design 1945-1970* (London: V & A Publishing, 2008). See also: Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1951* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997); Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe 1945-1960* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta, 1999)

relationship with the Soviet Union.⁶ One aspect of the ‘cultural cold war’ that has hereto escaped sustained scholarly attention, however, is that of academic exchange. This is, perhaps, not surprising. Next to the great exhibitions and theatre tours, grand showcases of the best of music, art, literature and cinema, the exchange of a handful of students across the iron curtain each year is, at first glance, rather mundane. However, while the more spectacular examples of Cold War cultural exchange took place in a highly organised environment—‘frequently circumscribed and rather artificial’ is how the British Cultural Attaché in Moscow described them to the Foreign Secretary in 1962⁷—and lasted only for matters of days or weeks, scholarly exchange saw students from Western Europe and the United States spending sometimes ten months or more living and studying in the Soviet Union, and vice versa. As a focal point for some of the most enduring contact between East and West during the course of the Cold War, therefore, academic exchange deserves further attention from historians.

To the extent that literature does exist on Cold War scholarly exchange between the Western and Eastern blocs, it is narrow and has some notable limitations.⁸ Its sole concentration on exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union is the most obvious. As the primary actors in the Cold War drama, and as the world’s only superpowers, the dynamic of American-Soviet exchange at any level can reasonably be expected to have been in many ways exceptional. Indeed, a growing number of scholars have noted the problems inherent in any analyses of the Cold War that focus solely on the dynamic between the two superpowers.

⁶ Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); David Cauter, *The Fellow-Travelers: Intellectual Friends of Communism*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988)

⁷ Addendum to Despatch No. 71 from Frank K. Roberts to the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Home, 12th June 1962, TNA: PRO, FO 924/1424.

⁸ E.g.: Volker R. Berghahn, *America and the Cultural Cold Wars in Europe: Shepard Stone between Philanthropy, Academy, and Diplomacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Allen H. Kassof, ‘Scholarly Exchanges and the Collapse of Communism’, *Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, 22:3 (1995), pp. 263-274; Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press)

Autio-Sarasmo and Miklóssy, for example, have pointed out recently that such an approach ‘over-accentuates the extent to which [the United States and the Soviet Union] shaped the course of world events’, and propose a new paradigm of ‘multi-leveled-multipolar interaction’ in order to better understand the Cold War.⁹ While a growing body of scholarship has concentrated, therefore, on states at the periphery of the conflict, academic exchange has not figured strongly in such analyses.¹⁰ A second limitation is discursive; while much of Cold War historiography has moved beyond the totalitarianism paradigm that effectively monopolised discourse in an earlier period,¹¹ analysis of academic exchange has remained squarely within this framework. It is telling, for example, that in his analysis, Yale Richmond draws on such a limited pool of Soviet exchange students, all of who went on to play various roles in the reform movement of the 1980s. What did the hundreds of other Soviet students who spent time in the United States between the 1950s and 1990s, but who didn’t then play a significant role in the dissident or reformist political scene, go on to do? And why are they any less worthy of consideration than those seven Soviet students Richmond has selected? One suspects it is because other students don’t fit quite so nicely with his hypothesis that American students played a critical role in the spread of democracy to Eastern bloc. Kassof takes a similar view in assessing the significance of US-Soviet scholarly exchange: Soviet academics became ‘agents of change’ who played a key role in the fall of communism at the end of the 1980s, while American exchange students served to ‘[provide] windows on the

⁹ Sari Autio-Sarasmo and Katalin Miklóssy (eds), ‘Introduction: The Cold War from a new perspective,’ in Autio-Sarasmo and Miklóssy (eds), *Reassessing Cold War Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 1. See also: Aiko Watanabe, ‘Cultural drives by the periphery: Britain’s experiences’, *History in Focus*, 10 (2006). Available online: <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/cold/articles/watanabe.html>. Last accessed: 17 April 2012.

¹⁰ See, for example, Anikó Macher, ‘Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy 1957-1963: Echoes of Western Cultural Activity in a Communist Country’; Annika Frieberg, ‘Catholics in Ostpolitik? Networking and Nonstate Diplomacy in the Bensberger Mountains, 1966-1970’, both in Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried (eds), *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2010), pp. 75-108; 109-132.

¹¹ Stephen F. Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History Since 1917* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 4.

outer world'.¹² In this way, scholarly exchange as a subject of study remains couched in binary categories that cast the United States as 'the City on the Hill' locked in Manichean opposition to the Soviet 'evil empire'.¹³

However, Sheila Fitzpatrick's account of her time as an exchange student in the Soviet Union during the mid-1960s suggests that such an approach may be inappropriate when considering the British experience of academic exchange with the USSR:

"Are you a spy?" [...] I was asked by an ingenuous schoolgirl in Volgograd. I said no, of course, but it wasn't an answer I was 100 per cent sure about. What exactly was a spy anyway? [...] Could one be a spy without knowing it?¹⁴

Fitzpatrick goes on, describing her time in the Soviet archives: 'Best of all was to find something the Soviets didn't want me to know *and* Western Cold Warriors didn't want to hear because it complicated the simple anti-Soviet story.'¹⁵ Fitzpatrick here demonstrates a clear diversion from the simple binary categories of much Cold War literature. Certainly, this psychological equivocation is interesting, and suggests a more complicated relationship between the British students, the British government and their Soviet hosts than many current analyses of scholarly exchange would accommodate. It is this relationship that is the focus of the current dissertation: how did academic exchange between the Britain and the Soviet Union develop and how did this fit into the British government's Cold War strategy? How did British exchange students react and adapt to life in the Soviet Union while navigating their various roles as scholars, as tourists and as unofficial ambassadors? And, perhaps most crucially, what implications does this have on our understanding of the Cold War more broadly?

¹² Kassof, 'Scholarly Exchanges', p. 263.

¹³ Jane L. Curry, 'Cold War: False Dichotomies and Real Problems', *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, 22:2 (1995), p. 148. See also Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 5, for more on binary categories.

¹⁴ Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'A Spy in the Archives', *London Review of Books*, 32:23 (2010). Available online: www.lrb.co.uk/v32/n23/sheila-fitzpatrick/a-spy-in-the-archives. Last accessed: 29th November 2011.

¹⁵ Fitzpatrick, 'Spy in the Archives'.

In answering these questions, the dissertation will challenge the conclusions drawn by the likes of Richmond and Kassof that the effect of exchanges was a one-way street. The corollary of their argument is that exchange students acted, consciously or not, as ‘agents’ of the state who ‘infiltrated’ the Soviet system from within, to borrow Fitzpatrick’s metaphor. Instead, by looking at how students utilised their study period to their own ends, a more complete picture of the significance of such exchanges can be reached that looks at students as more than mere cyphers of official government policy. In order to do this, archival records alone will not suffice; ‘Historians are what they eat,’¹⁶ one historian has noted and so, in order to vary the diet of the current analysis, records of the British Council and the Foreign Office—under whose auspices the exchanges on the British side fell—will be supplemented by oral and written testimony of nine former British exchange students who studied in the Soviet Union for various periods between 1959 and 1974. ‘Old men drooling about their youth,’ is how A. J. P. Taylor famously dismissed the use of oral testimony as a source of historical knowledge.¹⁷ And, while the use of oral history as a legitimate historical source is one that has only relatively recently come about,¹⁸ as Portelli has pointed out, its real value lies in its ability to convey the subjective reality of events: ‘[T]he importance of oral testimony may often lie not in its adherence to facts but in its divergence from them, where imagination, symbolism, desire break in.’¹⁹ It is for this divergence from the official record that others have turned to oral testimony recently to gain new insights into Cold War history.²⁰ Furthermore, as mentioned previously, Richmond’s work highlights the problems inherent in limiting analysis to a small group of potentially unrepresentative individuals

¹⁶ Richard J. Aldrich, ‘Liberation: Rolling Back the Frontiers of Clandestine Cold War History?’, *Cold War History*, 1:2 (2001), p. 129.

¹⁷ Cited in Brian Harrison, ‘Oral History and Recent Political History’, *Oral History*, 1:3 (1972), p. 46

¹⁸ The journal, *Oral History*, for example, began publication only in 1972; *The Oral History Review* began publication a year later.

¹⁹ Alessandro Portelli, ‘The Peculiarities of Oral History’, *History Workshop Journal*, 12:1 (1981), p. 100.

²⁰ Pia Koivunen, ‘Overcoming Cold War boundaries at the World Youth Festival’, in Autio-Sarasma and Miklóssy, *Reassessing Cold War Europe*, pp. 175-192.

whose experiences fail to enlighten any broader truths. Unfortunately, given the constraints of time and space afforded by any piece of writing, a comprehensive analysis of all individuals who took part in scholarly exchange is impossible. This poses a real methodological issue and one that, other than avoiding the temptation of extrapolating a sweeping conclusion from a limited set of sources, cannot readily be avoided. However, as shall be demonstrated in the following chapters, the light it casts on this particular episode of Anglo-Soviet relations more than outweigh oral history's methodological shortcomings.

The first chapter will consider how scholarly exchange developed between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, looking at how patterns of unofficial, sub-government level exchange in the inter-war period developed into the officially-mandated, British Council-sponsored exchange of the late-1950s and beyond, arguing that this move was—at least by some in the Foreign Office and, to an extent, in the British Council—stimulated by a desire to gain an ‘upper hand’ in the Cold War. This motivation, as shall be demonstrated, was instrumental in shaping the development of academic exchange. The second chapter will then involve an in depth analysis of the interviews, looking in particular at how the experience of British students involved a much more complex negotiation of roles than the simple ‘ambassadorial’ role envisioned by the likes of Richmond, comparing these testimonies with examples of written reports submitted by students to the British Council at the end of their sojourns to reveal that, rather than agency-free representatives of the British government, these students were involved in a complex process of adaptation that transcended any binary categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’ that might have dominated official discourse. In short, how British students’ role simultaneously in the Cold War could better be understood using the metaphor of ‘double agent’. The conclusion will be by way of a reflection on the value of the use of individual testimony as a means to better understand the realities of post-war, cross-bloc relations.

CHAPTER ONE:

'ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE'²¹

On 29th March 1959, the Soviet Relations Committee of the British Council and the State Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries of the Council of Ministers of the USSR signed the first Anglo-Soviet Cultural Agreement in Moscow. Coming after a visit to the Soviet capital earlier in the same month by Harold Macmillan and his foreign secretary, Selwyn Lloyd—at which the British prime minister and his Soviet counterpart, Nikita Khrushchev, acknowledged that the ‘interchange of people and knowledge ... is leading towards greater mutual understanding, friendship and peace between the British and Soviet peoples’—the Agreement set forth a programme of cultural relations that included exchange of over one hundred specialists in scientific and technical fields, exchanges of books, art exhibitions, films and musicians.²² Its most significant provisions, however, were in the field of scholarly exchange.²³ Prior to the Agreement, scholarly exchange amounted largely to small National Union of Student delegations whose highly orchestrated sojourns lasted no more than a couple of weeks. A 1951 delegation, for example, spent three weeks being shepherded around towns and cities in a highly scripted tour. ‘We would have been glad to cut down the time we spent on some visits of general interest and on official receptions and meals ... in favour of more unofficial meetings with citizens and students,’ it stated in a

²¹ Ian Fleming, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1963)

²² ‘Prime Minister’s Visit to Moscow: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: Annex: Agreement on Cultural Exchanges’, 5th March 1959. TNA: PRO, CAB 129/69; ‘More Anglo-Soviet Exchanges: Cultural Visits to Be Doubled’, *The Times*, 30th March 1959, p. 10.

²³ Caute, *Dancer Defects*, p. 30.

report published on its return.²⁴ The Agreement, on the other hand, provided for twenty postgraduate students to spend ten months—a full academic year—at either Moscow State University (MGU) or Leningrad State University (LGU) in, as the interviews will demonstrate, a much less controlled environment.

Before any further discussion of the shape and scope of these academic exchanges is attempted, it is important to look at the context in which they developed. By 1946, the wartime alliance between the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union was fracturing. In March of that year, Churchill famously declared that an ‘iron curtain’ had fallen across the continent. ‘[T]his is certainly not the liberated Europe we fought to build up,’ he told the assembled students. ‘Nor is it one which contains the essentials for peace.’²⁵ Later, on the other side of the Atlantic, US President Harry Truman decried the threat to freedom of ‘imperialistic communism’ and its systematic use of deceit, distortion and lies.²⁶ It was no coincidence that he chose to say this in front of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. ‘No group of men in this country,’ he had said earlier, ‘is of greater importance to our foreign policy than the group your society represents.’²⁷ Over the next forty years, while the diplomatic intrigue of the Berlin Blockade and the Cuban Missile Crisis, of proxy wars and peace summits occupied politicians and statesmen, culture became an increasingly important arena of contestation in the Cold War, reaching into the very heart of peoples’ lives; everything, from sport and ballet to books and space travel acquired a political significance with the potential to influence opinion abroad.²⁸

Examples of the politicisation of culture include the first World Youth Festival, held in

²⁴ NUS, *British Students Visit the Soviet Union: A Report of a Delegation of The National Union of Students 1951* (London: K-H Services, 1951), p. 92.

²⁵ Winston Churchill, ‘The Sinews of Peace’, Speech at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, USA, 5th March 1946.

²⁶ Harry S. Truman, ‘Campaign of Truth’, Speech at the Hotel Statler, Washington, D.C., USA, 20th April 1950.

²⁷ Truman, ‘Campaign of Truth’.

²⁸ Tony Shaw, ‘The Politics of Cold War Culture’, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 3:3 (2001), p. 59.

Prague in 1947, which attracted 17,000 young people from 71 countries. Ten years later, at the sixth Festival in Moscow, the number in attendance had doubled.²⁹ In its coverage of the latter gathering, *Life* perhaps only marginally exaggerated broader Western scepticism of these events when it described it as ‘Communism’s sugar-coated device for mass brainwashing of youngsters from everywhere.’³⁰ It was for this reason—‘non-contamination’—that the United States government made it so difficult for its citizens to attend the ‘57 Festival, much to the disappointment of those Americans who managed to make the trip.³¹ Evidence suggests that the United States also made it difficult for the youth of other nations in the Western bloc to make the journey; newspaper reports in 1951 carried stories of British students being loaded onto trains and directed back to the border by US oops in Austria on their way to the Berlin Festival. One account reported the case of a nineteen-year-old British student who required eight stitches after having been hit with a rifle butt by an American soldier.³² Aside from physically preventing Western youth from attending such events, for their part, the Americans also expended considerable energy on cultural propaganda. *Radio Free Europe* and *Radio Liberty*, established in 1949 and 1953 respectively and broadcast across Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union from bases in Germany, were ‘pure Cold War institutions’, whose goals were not just to inform, but to ‘bring about the peaceful demise of the Communist system’ and the liberation of Eastern Europe.³³ Similarly, the *Voice of America*, which started Russian-language broadcasts in 1947, was a key weapon in America’s Cold War strategy.³⁴ In Britain, meanwhile, the CIA-

²⁹ Koivunen, ‘Overcoming Cold War boundaries’, p. 176.

³⁰ ‘U.S.S.R. Teaches—And Is Taught: Youth from 102 Lands Swarms Over Moscow’, *Life*, 43:7 (1957), p. 22

³¹ Frederick C. Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 25.

³² ‘Stopped on Way to Berlin: Festival Travellers: Hundreds Stranded in Austria’, *The Guardian*, 4th August 1951, p. 5; ‘The Berlin Youth Festival: A Communist Demonstration Against the West’, *Guardian*, 4th August 1951, p. 6; John M. Thompson, ‘Letters to the Editor’, *Guardian*, 13th August 1951, p. 4; John Clews, ‘Letters to the Editor’, *Guardian*, 17th August 1951, p. 4.

³³ Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 2000), p. ix.

³⁴ Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, p. 32.

financed Congress for Cultural Freedom was designed to ‘nudge’ the intelligentsia away from its continued flirtation with Marxism towards greater acceptance of American influence.³⁵ In this respect, the CCF can be viewed as the (rather belated) American answer to the Soviet Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS). Established in 1925, VOKS was designed as a ‘propaganda arm’ of Soviet power, working in particular with the growing network of national ‘friendship societies’.³⁶ In Britain, these took the form of the Society for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union (SCR) and the British-Soviet Friendship Society (BSFS). The former, founded in 1924 by a who’s who of the London literary and scientific elite including Virginia Woolf, George Bernard Shaw and Beatrice Webb, was designed, prior to the 20th Party Congress in 1956, to recruit British intellectuals to the Soviet cause. Meanwhile, the BSFS concentrated its efforts on courting the British working class.³⁷ The *Anglo-Soviet Journal*, published by the SCR between 1940 and 1992 carried accounts of fellow-travellers’ sojourns to the Soviet Union, translations from the likes of *Pravda* and *Literaturnaia Gazeta* and articles by leading Soviet intellectuals and cultural figures such as Il’ia Erenburg and Boris Chirkov.³⁸

The impact of these societies should not be underestimated; one contemporary observer called them collectively ‘probably the most powerful of any organization in the world for the diffusion of culture’.³⁹ Indeed, by the mid-1950s, these two societies held a virtual monopoly on relations between British and Soviet citizens. As a result, in an attempt to undermine the

³⁵ Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?*, p. 1.

³⁶ Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 39; David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, p. 40.

³⁷ Darren G. Lilleker, *Against the Cold War: The History and Political Traditions of Pro-Sovietism in the British Labour Party, 1945-89* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), p. 31; Anne E. Gorsuch, *All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad After Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 146, n. 88.

³⁸ See, for example: Ilya Ehrenburg, ‘Intellectuals in the Modern World: A Soviet View Discussed’, *ASJ* (Dec., 1948), pp. 14-16; ‘Letter from Members of the Editorial Board of *Novy Mir* to Boris Pasternak’, *ASJ* (Dec., 1958), pp. 47-51; ‘Letter from Boris Pasternak to the Editors of *Pravda*’, *ASJ* (Dec., 1958), pp. 51-52; Sarah White, ‘A Student in Moscow’, *ASJ* (Jun., 1965), pp. 37-40.

³⁹ F. F., ‘Soviet Cultural Collaboration’, pp. 207-8.

Friendship Societies' influence, the British Council was moved to create the Soviet Relations Committee in 1955.⁴⁰ That the Committee's role was a political one as much as a cultural one—a point quickly picked up in the contemporary press—was reflected in the choice of a self-confessed 'hardened Cold Warrior' as its first Chairman, Labour MP Christopher Mayhew.⁴¹ More telling still was the first draft of the Committee's purpose:

The purpose of the Committee is to spread a knowledge of Britain inside the Soviet Union primarily by encouraging visits to this country under proper auspices and discouraging visits under communist auspices.⁴²

While the final version was heavily edited, the promotion of mutual understanding replacing the one-way 'spread of knowledge' as the basis for relations, it is clear that, as in the Soviet Union and the United States, pressing political considerations were fundamental in shaping the course of relations in the cultural field. It was in this international context that the British Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary made their trip to Moscow in 1958 and the same international context that shaped the development of cultural, including scholarly, exchanges over subsequent years.

The content of the Cultural Agreements was very prescriptive. The 1959 Agreement, signed in London in December of that year and setting out exchanges for the years 1960-61, for instance, sets forth a programme of exchange of twenty postgraduates each way for one academic year, ten in languages and ten in other subjects. It also makes provision for a summer school between the University of Glasgow and one of the Soviet universities involving twenty students for a period of four weeks.⁴³ As time went on, the Agreements

⁴⁰ Christopher Mayhew, *Time to Explain* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), p. 139-40.

⁴¹ Mayhew, *Time to Explain*, p. 140.

⁴² 'The British Council: Executive Committee: Sub-Committee on Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R., 1st Meeting to be held at 65 Davies Street, W.1. on Thursday, 21st April 1955 at 10.00 a.m.: Agenda'. [Draft]. TNA: PRO, FO 371/116118. The final version read: 'The purpose of the Committee is to promote mutual understanding between Britain and the Soviet Union primarily by encouraging visits in both directions under approved auspices.'

⁴³ 'Treaty Series No. 82' (Cmnd. 917, 1959), V(1)(iii).

became increasingly restrictive, detailing exchanges down to their total number of hours; in the 1965 Agreement, as well as twenty-two postgraduate students for the full academic year, a further six postgraduate exchanges of between three to seven months and not exceeding more than thirty ‘man-months’ in total were agreed upon.⁴⁴ In the following Agreement signed two years later, the number of postgraduates permitted was almost doubled to 45, up to a total of 360 ‘man-months’, the implication being that not all of those would be allowed to stay for a full academic year. In the same year, the preamble was also changed to acknowledge the ‘important contribution to the further development of *friendship* and peaceful co-operation between the two countries’ that the exchanges made, in spite of the restraint exhibited in the terms of the Agreement.⁴⁵

However, despite these overtures of friendship and peace, there is significant evidence that the British Council and the Foreign Office saw these exchanges as key arenas for advancing Cold War aims. Both implicitly and explicitly, it was made clear that these exchanges were important in this respect. Speaking at a meeting discussing the progress of the exchange programme after its first three years, R. L. Speaight of the Foreign Office Cultural Relations Department pointed out that ‘exchanges with the U.S.S.R. were fundamentally different from exchanges with other countries. They formed part of the Cold War exercise and it was therefore important to ensure that we got the maximum value from them’.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, while it was noted that widening of contacts with the Soviet Union were desirable, this could not involve a ‘weakening in [the British] determination to defend the essential positions of the free world’.⁴⁷ That copies of the Cultural Agreements were forwarded to the Canadian and

⁴⁴ ‘Treaty Series No. 35’ (Cmnd. 2652, 1965), V(2)(c); V(2)(d).

⁴⁵ ‘Treaty Series No. 39’ (Cmnd. 3279, 1967), V(2)(c); Preamble. Emphasis added.

⁴⁶ ‘Draft note of meeting held [...] at the British Council to discuss a memorandum by the Cultural Attaché, British Embassy, Moscow, on Anglo-Soviet Cultural Exchanges together with H. M. Ambassador’s Despatch No. 71’, 20th June 1962. TNA: PRO, FO 924/1424.

⁴⁷ Telegram from the British Embassy in Moscow to the Foreign Office regarding 1961 Cultural Agreement, TNA: PRO, FO 924/1427.

American governments before being made public is further testament to the level of strategic planning that formed an integral part of negotiations with the Soviets.⁴⁸

This political priority was increasingly expressed in the selection of candidates for scholarships; selection panels were made up of Foreign Office officials as well as academics, and selection was based not only on academic merit, but on ‘strength of character’, which appears to be a euphemism for a ‘clean’ record as far as communist tendencies go. Should a candidate be deemed unsuitable in that respect, the British Council would be sent a short letter by the Foreign Office ‘advising’ them against offering him or her a scholarship.⁴⁹ The records for the mid- to late-1960s, in particular, are rife with examples of these letters—‘We advise against his being considered for a studentship in the USSR’—as well as with letters from university academics confused at why their academically strong students had been rejected by the BC. These letters appear to suggest that candidates were not made aware if their application had been declined on the basis of FO objections.⁵⁰

While this does demonstrate a tendency towards viewing academic exchanges as something more than an opportunity for the advancement of knowledge, some qualifications are required. The first is to point out that care is needed before drawing too strong a line between British Cold War strategy and the strategy of the United States. While this chapter has shown that there is some merit in Richmond and Kassof’s analyses when applied to Foreign Office and, to an extent, British Council attitudes towards academic exchange, it must be borne in mind that the general British attitude towards both superpowers in this period was by and large conciliatory. As Geraint Hughes has noted, ‘the British policy towards the Cold War combined the more confrontational characteristics inherent in “containment” with a less

⁴⁸ Letter from Pierre Trottier (Canadian High Commissioner) to R. L. Speaight, 6th February 1961. TNA: PRO, FO 924/1394.

⁴⁹ E.g., Letter from C. Dolan to P. Leeman, 16th March 1965. TNA: PRO, BW 64/70.

⁵⁰ E.g., Letter from R. Milner-Gulland to S. G. West, 14th February 1969. TNA: PRO, BW 64/70.

adversarial approach focused on coexistence'.⁵¹ For all that there were elements within the Foreign Office that could be described as 'hard-boiled' anti-communists,⁵² the FO on the whole was supportive of British efforts towards détente. Similarly, there is a danger of overstating the Cold War mentality of the British Council; the BC's aim in general was to 'induce in the people of other countries a state of mind favourable to [Britain]'.⁵³ In that sense, its interest in recruiting people 'suitable' for the transmission of British values abroad is not necessarily out of the ordinary. Having said that, as has been noted, the FO and BC accepted the peculiarity of the relationship with the Soviet Union both implicitly and explicitly, a reality that was reflected in a tendency to approach exchanges as a Cold War resource. While it would be wrong, therefore, to suggest that there was ever any conscious attempt on the part of the British Council or the Foreign Office to 'recruit' students as a means of gathering intelligence, underlying assumptions and attitudes that contributed to the development of scholarly exchange, including the exclusion of some candidates considered of 'poor character', resulted in the growth of a *potential* cadre of 'citizen diplomats'. 'Potential' is significant, as the following chapter will show.

⁵¹ Geraint Hughes, *Harold Wilson's Cold War: The Labour Government and East-West Politics, 1964-1970* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009), p. 6.

⁵² Keith Neilson, 'The British Way in Warfare and Russia', in Keith Neilson and Greg Kennedy (eds), *The British Way in Warfare: Power and the International System, 1856-1956, Essays in Honour of David French* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 23-24.

⁵³ Diana Jane Eastment, 'The Politics and Position of the British Council from the Outbreak of War to 1950'. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1982, p. 308.

CHAPTER TWO:

'FROM RUSSIA, WITH LOVE'⁵⁴

'[A]t that time he was a sensation!' So remembered one former exchange student of Evgenii Evtushenko: 'he'd written about people coming back from the camps, he'd written all sorts of forbidden things. ... [A]ll these revelations about the people, innocent people imprisoned and people coming back from the camps, this was enormously interesting.⁵⁵ People have often been secondary considerations in accounts of the Cold War.⁵⁶ By concentrating on the intention of policy makers, rather than on lived experiences, it has been easy to paint the Cold War in black and white terms, with little room for ambiguity: the United States 'won', the Soviet Union 'lost'. By looking at the lived experiences of those for whom the confrontation between East and West was part of their everyday lives, however, a more nuanced picture of this conflict can be drawn, where individuals adapted their situations to their own benefit, where the dualities of East and West, capitalist and communist, 'us' and 'them' become blurred.

In order to capture academic exchange 'from below', interviews were conducted with five former exchange students. Written communication was received from two others. One, the only woman interviewed, was among the first group of British scholars to travel to the Soviet Union in September 1959, spending her year in Leningrad. Three others travelled in 1960,

⁵⁴ Ian Fleming, *From Russia, With Love* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957)

⁵⁵ F/81/Leningrad 1959-60. Interviewed on 19th December 2011.

⁵⁶ See, for example, diplomatic histories such as: John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking the Cold War* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997)

two spending the year in Moscow under Article V of the Agreement, the other based in Leningrad. The latter was, unlike the other interviewees, in the Soviet Union under Article I of the Agreement; that is, on the exchange programme between the Royal Society and the Soviet Academy of Sciences. One further interviewee travelled in 1963, and the final one travelled in 1970. Three—all, perhaps not coincidentally, in the first and second cohort of students—subsequently married Russians. The interviews have been anonymised; the references refer to each by their sex, age at time of the interview and location and date of their exchange. Supplementing these are some of the reports, found in the British Council archives, that students were required to make on their return to Britain. The significance of these ‘file-selves’ is that, ‘unlike real-self memory, notoriously unreliable, file-self memory is normally incorrigible’. That is not to say that a ‘file-self contains truths, but that ‘it is normally impervious to self-reconstruction’.⁵⁷ Considering the significant changes in world affairs over the past fifty years—the ‘end of history’,⁵⁸ if you like—the potential for self-reconstruction with regard to a now vanquished ‘other’ is a particularly pressing concern in this case. Their intended audience—British Council and Foreign Office personnel—also makes them interesting artifacts. Rather than other accounts intended for publication,⁵⁹ these were written for the private use of those organisations. As such, their content was tailored to this need. As this chapter shows, this led to a significant pattern of amplification of certain aspects of Soviet life—generally, though not exclusively, the hardships—at the expense of other—usually social—aspects.

All of those interviewed shared the same impression of the Soviet Union before they visited, imagining the Soviet citizen as cowed and submissive. As such, they differed significantly

⁵⁷ Rom Harré, *Personal Being: A Theory of Individual Psychology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 70. See also Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks!: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), esp. pp. 14-18 for more on ‘file-selves’ in the Soviet context.

⁵⁸ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1992)

⁵⁹ See, for example: NUS, *British Students Visit the Soviet Union*.

from many of those who had visited the USSR under the aegis of the Friendship Societies; these were not ‘fellow-travellers’. As Chapter 1 has shown, ‘character’—i.e. no overt Communist sympathies—was as much a prerequisite of selection as academic ability, so the fact that these successful applicants held such reservations is not surprising. That this fairly disparate group of students and postgraduates held such common preconceptions, however, is testament to the power of culture in shaping public opinion, and an indication of the contemporary image of the USSR projected to them in newspapers, in films, in propaganda, in the broadest sense of the word. However, their opinion quickly changed. Indeed, speaking with them, it became clear that they did not experience the Soviet Union in terms of ‘going behind enemy lines’. Instead, they frame their recollections of their time in very prosaic, very personal terms: ‘The first sniff of raw Soviet diesel fumes at the station or airport made my heart leap up (till they upgraded the diesel, around *perestroika*)’.⁶⁰ International affairs seemed to be very much secondary to their experience in the Soviet Union.

That is not to say that their time was an entirely pleasant one; without exception, all commented on the general hardship of daily life in the Soviet Union. Particularly strong memories involved the general lack of variety, in terms of food, and the general drabness of life. Contemporary student reports are similarly despondent about some aspects of the material aspect of Soviet life. Some suggest vitamin pills to offset the lack of fresh fruit and vegetables; others give an insiders guide to where fresh fruit could be found. One attempt to ameliorate their son’s low-vitamin diet ended with an interviewee receiving a food parcel ruined by a rotten lemon.⁶¹ It seems, too, that the state of Soviet toilets was a source of constant dismay for British visitors. ‘Our first surprise was the state of the ship’s lavatories,’ recounted Christopher Mayhew of his trip to the Soviet Union as a student at Oxford in the summer of 1935. ‘By the standards of reactionary capitalist countries, they were so filthy as

⁶⁰ M/76/Moscow 1960-61. Written communication received 9th April 2012.

⁶¹ M/75/Moscow 1960-61. Interviewed on 19th April 2012.

to be unusable.’⁶² The hardship of Soviet life was a point vociferously picked up by representatives of the British government in Moscow. Writing to the Foreign Secretary, C. A. James, the Cultural Attaché at the Embassy described the experience of students at MGU:

The British post-graduates in the Soviet Union do not have an easy time. The University of Moscow to which the majority are sent is a bleak and daunting institution. Set on the Lenin Hills (the Sparrow Hills of “War and Peace”), this massive piece of Stalinist architecture with its twenty thousand students, its central tower twenty-four storeys high, miles of corridors, theatre, gymnasias, scores of lecture rooms, seems designed to crush the spirit of the individual. [...] They are rarely harassed by the more officious kind of Soviet youth leader. But the Soviet winter is long and bleak and spirits tend to fall.⁶³

However, the most striking thing to come out of the interviews is the relative normality of social relations between the exchange students and their Soviet counterparts. Every interviewee commented on the breadth and intensity of social contacts.⁶⁴ This ranged from long nights kept up talking with Soviet students in rooms, to being sat talking about girls and football to regular visits to the theatre. One interviewee went as far as to say that ‘the art of conversation was practiced at a higher level in Moscow in the 1960s than probably anywhere else in the world at the time, including the High Table in Oxford and Cambridge’.⁶⁵ Others didn’t go quite so far, noting that alcohol was a common feature of many of these discussions.⁶⁶ What is clear is that, in most respects, the British scholars led quite normal student lives; the Cold War was not something that loomed over them in their day-to-day lives.⁶⁷

These strong social ties, however, were not readily relayed back to the British Council in their reports, however. Indeed, many reports actually report the difficulty in forming close

⁶² Mayhew, *Time to Explain*, p. 24.

⁶³ Despatch No. 71 from Frank K. Roberts, British Ambassador, Moscow, to the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Home (Foreign Secretary), 12th June 1962. TNA: PRO, FO 924/1424.

⁶⁴ M/63/Leningrad 1970-71. Interviewed on 11th April 2012.

⁶⁵ M/69/Moscow 1964-65. Interviewed on 2nd February 2012.

⁶⁶ M/73/Moscow 1963. Written communication received on 3rd March 2012.

⁶⁷ This point was particularly emphasised by M/76/Leningrad 1960-61. Interviewed on 4th April 2012.

friendships with Soviet students: 'Social contacts with the Soviet students were very slight'; 'It is still difficult to have close friendships with Russian students'; 'The majority of the students did not appear to have made close friendships with Soviet citizens during their year in the Soviet Union'.⁶⁸ In the case of three who were eventually married to Soviet citizens, this was clearly not the case! The reasons for this may lie in what one interviewee called 'information hygiene'.⁶⁹ In their interviews, it was made clear that, for most of them, there was a clear understanding that conversations stayed private, that friendships with one Soviet student were not revealed to another Soviet student, leading in one case, at least, to the unusual position whereby the interviewee was friends with two Soviet students without knowing they knew each other. This 'information hygiene' was carried back home, where the extent of relationships was often suppressed, or at least minimised.⁷⁰ Clearly, this was not always practical, particularly if the British scholar was romantically involved with a Soviet student. However, in assessing the British scholars' usefulness as 'Cold Warriors', this is a significant point. How can they have operated as a 'spy', consciously or subconsciously, if the British Council and Foreign Office were unaware of the extent of their contacts? It becomes clear in this instance that British scholars were engaged in a process of creating their own 'space', independent of any expectations they may have had from Britain, in which they were able to make the most of social contacts in the Soviet Union without the subsequent need to explain themselves at home or to Soviet authorities. Pia Koivenun has identified a similar process among Soviet youth at the World Youth Festivals.⁷¹

Another interesting aspect of the exchanges that came out of the interviews is the relationship

⁶⁸ M. Bourdeaux, 'Interim Report on Postgraduate Studentship in the USSR', 12th February 1960. TNA: PRO, BW 64/70; Despatch No. 71 from Frank K. Roberts, British Ambassador, Moscow, to the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Home (Foreign Secretary), 12th June 1962. TNA: PRO, FO 924/1424; 'Anglo-Soviet Agreement 1963-65: Note of meetings held with British postgraduates for 1963-64 and 1964-65', 27th August 1964. TNA: PRO, BW 64/72.

⁶⁹ M/69/Moscow 1964-65. Interviewed on 2nd February 2012.

⁷⁰ M/69/Moscow 1964-65; M/73/Moscow 1963; M/75/Moscow 1960-61; F/81/Leningrad 1959-60.

⁷¹ Koivunen, 'Overcoming Cold War boundaries', pp. 175-189.

between British scholars and individuals representing 'officialdom'. The encounter of one interviewee with the British Ambassador in Moscow is particularly interesting. On learning of his intention to marry a Soviet woman, the Ambassador summoned him to the Embassy. 'You realise this is the end of any chance you have of being employed in any interesting job in England, the Foreign Office, the military won't want you,' the Ambassador told him. 'A slight grin appeared on his face—a sort of sardonic grin—,' the interviewee continued, 'And he said: "You do realise my wife's a Syrian, don't you?" And he laughed.'⁷² Clearly, taking one anecdote as evidence of wider truths is problematic. However, taken with other evidence—the selective relay of information by students back to the British Council, for instance—a picture begins to develop of a considerable grey area in relations which reliance on archival sources would fail to highlight. While officially, relations may have been drawn along combative lines, taken an individual basis, it becomes increasingly clear that there was, at least in some cases, clear deviation from this official line. This highlights a particular strength of oral history when looking at a conflict that has become as discursively reified as the Cold War.

⁷² M/75/Moscow 1960-61.

CONCLUSION

No people are uninteresting.
Their fate is like the chronicle of planets.

Nothing in them is not particular,
and planet is dissimilar from planet.

And if a man lived in obscurity
making his friends in that obscurity
obscurity is not uninteresting.

—EVGENII EVTUSHENKO, 'PEOPLE', 1961⁷³

Oral history remains, perhaps quite rightly, a contentious mode of historical research. The use of anecdotal evidence from a necessarily limited and, oftentimes, unrepresentative group of individuals leaves considerable questions about the veracity of any conclusions that can be drawn from them. Indeed, the people I have encountered in the course of this dissertation sum up this problem: three married Soviet citizens; four were among the first groups of postgraduates to travel to the Soviet Union; all but one have gone on to careers in academia. They are, in many respects, an exceptional group of people. Equally, though, they are very ordinary. Their experiences of life in the Soviet Union are, in many ways, not that very different to the experience of student life anywhere else; the chats around tea about football and girls and where they come from, these are experiences that any student at any university in the world—Cold War or not—will find familiar. Evgenii Evtushenko's poem, 'People', gets to the heart of this dichotomous relationship between the exceptional and the mundane. The process of 'extracting' information from living sources also makes oral history a tricky endeavour. How can I remain disinterested, at arm's left from the subject of my research,

⁷³ Yevgeny Yevtushenko, *Selected Poems*, trans. Robin Milner-Gulland and Peter Levi (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 85.

when I'm sat in my subject's living room, listening to them share with me personal memories of their formative years? Is it even desirable that I should distance myself? How can I expect to get the best out of my subject if not by empathising and 'joining in', as it were, with their stories? 'I'm so glad that you have that slightly sceptical view because I wasn't sure that I wanted to contribute,' one of my interviewees said to me in their kitchen just before Christmas.⁷⁴ Is oral history bound to exist in an 'echo chamber', whereby interviewees can only hope to get the most out of their subjects if they share with them a common outlook? These are questions that are, I think, by and large unanswerable, and certainly they raise further important questions. However, it has been my experience that, for all its potential misgivings, oral history has an important contribution to make. Archival research can only take us so far, particularly in fields such as cultural exchange where cause and effect are difficult to measure. Rom Harré has noted the specific 'vocabulary of files'.⁷⁵ Spending time in Foreign Office archives, you quickly get some sense of this vocabulary: a formality, a talent for disguising demands as 'advice'. In restricting analysis to these files, to this 'vocabulary', are you not restricting yourself to the discursive framework of those about whom you write? Richard Aldrich suggests so.⁷⁶ It is only by listening to vignettes such as that recounted to me by one of my interviewees—his encounter with the British Ambassador in Moscow, his being told that by marrying a Soviet woman he was closing a lot of doors, before being smiled at and told, 'But don't worry, I married a Syrian'—that you get a sense of the 'texture', the 'thick description', of a situation.⁷⁷ It is in such stories that the rigidity of diplomacy breaks down and the importance of individuals as the basis for understanding broader historical 'truths' is established.

⁷⁴ F/81/Leningrad 1959-60.

⁷⁵ Harré, *Personal Being*, p. 71.

⁷⁶ Aldrich, 'Liberation', p. 129.

⁷⁷ Clifford Geertz, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3-30.

Both Sheila Fitzpatrick and Katerina Clark have written about the significance of the ‘mask’ in Soviet society, the idea that enemies of the people could disguise themselves behind a veneer of communist sensibilities.⁷⁸ The experience of British students in the Soviet Union demonstrates that the process of developing different ‘masks’ was not the preserve of Soviet citizens trying to avoid suffocating in their own country’s bureaucracy and secret police. In order to create a space of their own—a space apart from the conflicting of concerns of the British and Soviet governments—these students similarly acquired a ‘set’ of masks: one for their British Council ‘handlers’, one for Soviet officialdom, one for their Soviet friends, one for their friends at home. That is not to say that at times these masks did not slip, or that they had a different mask for every situation or, indeed, that different masks didn’t share common characteristics. Going back now to Fitzpatrick’s question, and to the broader conclusion made by others that exchanges were an integral part in bringing to an end the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the USSR. Were these *aspiranty* spies, ‘unwitting assets’⁷⁹ of the British state? A satisfactory answer is difficult to arrive at. On the one hand, these students did shine a light on elements of Soviet life that would have otherwise remained in the dark. In particular, the Royal Society exchanges and the highly technical reports they generated gave an insight into the state of Soviet science that the British may not otherwise have received. Similarly, as a means of ‘projecting the West’, British exchange students were invaluable, a fact reflected in the British Council and Foreign Office emphasis on attracting applicants with ‘strength of character’ as well as academic ability. Certainly, there is evidence that some students were more aware of their role as ‘cultural ambassador’ than others and, as demonstrated above, the extent to which they adopted this persona varied greatly. On the other hand, however, the *aspiranty* acted to undermine any value they may have had as intelligence assets. The reports of those researching in the field of arts and humanities read

⁷⁸ Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!*, esp. pp. 65-69; Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome*, pp. 225-240.

⁷⁹ Hugh Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War: Calling the Tune?* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), p. 193.

oftentimes more like self-help manuals than as specialist insights into the internal workings of a belligerent foe. Furthermore, the systematic use of ‘information hygiene’—the selective sharing of information between people both in the Soviet Union and back at home—severely limited the usefulness of exchange students as relays of information about the ‘real Russia’. The comparison between the hour spent talking with one interviewee about the friends she made, the long nights spent sat up in bed talking with Soviet students and the way she chose to report it on her return—‘I found these unlimited but that was not everybody’s experience’—is stark.⁸⁰

This dissertation began by looking at two things. One was the existing literature concerning American exchanges and its implicit argument that scholars were Cold Warriors, ‘agents’ of the American state. The other was Sheila Fitzpatrick’s account of her sojourn: was she a spy? On the first count, it has been shown that the British, while not always as brazenly as the Americans, did pursue see academic exchange as a potential tool in the ongoing Cold War conflict. However, to suggest that British scholars were simply tools of the state is to ignore the complex process by which they manoeuvred between the British and Soviet bureaucracies to create a space that existed outside of simple Cold War binaries. Rather than ‘spies’ or ‘agents’, British exchange students can best be understood as ‘conduits of influence’, both projecting an image of the West while simultaneously coming to understand better the ambiguities of the Soviet system.

⁸⁰ F/81/Leningrad 1959-60; ‘Report on a Year’s Postgraduate Studentship’. TNA: PRO, BW 64/70.

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